



*DIY tips
from 93 folks
like you!*

SPECIAL READER-CREATED ISSUE!

This Old House

See
America's
**BEST
REMODEL**
inside

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cottage
kitchens

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bedrooms
and baths

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**PLUS!
READ THIS
BEFORE YOUR
SMART-HOME
UPGRADE**

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OCTOBER 2015
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100% reader- created issue

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We do our best to be the words behind those ingenious household ideas

THIS QUARTER'S BEST
DIY PROJECTS AND HOME IDEAS

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THIS OLD HOUSE OCTOBER 2015

Inside, you'll find the stories of the creative and determined DIYers below—and those of many others who entered our **Search for America's Best Remodel Contest**

To redo his house, he had to pull all his neighbors so that he could pick up his kids on time.
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WYNELL T. WINTER
Styling by ANNA HIGGINS

THIS OLD HOUSE
THE TV SHOW'S WEBSITE
thisoldhouse.com



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Get a head
with four
antlers



Get food
that serves
well

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DESIGN MATTERS



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I gotta say, you people are nuts!

It's nice to know I'll have friends in the night. Maybe not all of you will be there, but let's be honest: The level of crazy in the stanzas you sent in for this eighth annual Remodel-Created House is so impressive in the home-improvement work you've done.

Here, in my DIY permits, these rules from a ladder, nearly electrocuted myself (a sharp red wire, lost the nail on my great toe, coughed sawdust out of my ears, and spent time in the lockup for an inappropriate relationship with a hand saw).

But you people have let the remodel disease creep into the gray matter in ways that impress me so.

Some want normal. I don't go and buy average wooden crenating boots while on vacation because they know backhome I'll make an excellent foot. But Kevin and Mia Maden did, and you'll see their handiwork on page 118. I miss this kindly, but you paid a loose screw (3-inch, coarse-thread, drywall, perhaps) to do that.

And which is crazier: being afraid of bright light or being afraid of the lights but letting your husband strap you to a scanner left to you to conjure the topography of your house because you're "determined," as Bob Stevens (Dethling was? In another world, that's a great point) said in *CBS* episode. But I like to you what's even crazier: getting up in the dark before work, putting on a headlamp, and grubbing a shovel to plant shrubs. The looking of you, Dwight Green, and whispering, "Whoa, that looks like grave robbery?"

To be honest, maybe the single scariest thing I heard from you guys was Kim Guffin's experience of burning the denim on her place (was right, too right). Congrats on dropping 20, Kim? Otherwise, I'll donate to you epidemic therapy, from those of you who were hospitalized (only to be back at the project days later) in the expert rooms who labored on their remodels (I'll be back to it).

Can we agree that the lot of you are just not right in the head, and the place you call home and your family—and, because you've shared your stories with us, the larger family of *TMZ* fans—are better for it? We can, and wouldn't want it any other way.

So thank you, and I'll see you in the padded room. I don't know what we'll do, there probably won't be any DIY, cause who's going to let us have any sharp tools or even hammers? But we can trade stories. Or use tools. Yay, we're back to (a) nature of furniture and maybe even the house to go around it.

Until then, check out the whole-house winners of this year's Search for America's Best Remodel. They and the one-room winners that follow are proof that getting your hands dirty—and, yes, being a little off-balance—can yield truly amazing results.

Scott O'Connell
SCOTT O'CONNELL, EDITOR
scott@remodelaholic.com

Letter FROM THIS OLD HOUSE



The editor is sitting through reader letters for this issue.



Get your own tale of crazy? We can. Share your story of wild one DIY with me on Twitter @scottomelloruk using #TWTOTC.

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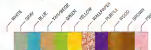
THIS OLD HOUSE | OCTOBER 2015

Color was a big theme in our Search for America's Best Remodel. Here's a kaleidoscopic picture of how you made use of it

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Edited by Michelle Dranner

INSIDE | CREATIVE REUSE | HEALTHY HOME | FLOOR CARE | SALVAGE STYLE | MORE



They upcycled a factory cart

As soon as Emily Donforth and Erica Edsall of Providence, Rhode Island, saw this old mill cart, they knew it would make a perfect kitchen island for their 1900 Gothic Revival home. "Much of our renovation was inspired by our desire to repurpose funky vintage items," says Emily. "We love the cart's rustic, industrial look and striking green paint."

To get the lowdown on this and other "From this to that" reader transformations, turn the page. →

From this to that

FACTORY CART → KITCHEN ISLAND

The same day we spied this old mill carting a salvage load. We found a slab of perfectly square marble in a nearby antiques showroom. We knew it would make the perfect top! We cut down the handles to bring the cart to work on it on night and laid salvaged floor boards across it to create a base to support the marble. Then we drilled through the marble and inserted dowels to attach the handles so it looks like the miller was using these. Now the island is the hub of our home.

Emily Danforth and Erica Ednell
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND



ORGAN PIPES → FEATURE WALL

When we found five truckloads of solid-pine church organ pipes destined for the burn pile at a local farm, we had to rescue them.

After running a bunch through the planer in our workshop, we used the honey-banded wood to create paneling for a badge-inspired feature wall and a fun fireplace mantel, accented with twirling bone tile.

John and Karen Karrs
PULMONARY PHYSICIAN

DCORS → DAYBED

Had been searching high and low for a queen-size daybed for the guest room.

of my 1929 Tudor. Finally, I decided to build one myself. I got two solid-wood doors from the Habitat for Humanity Red Cross and cut one to fit the windowed corner of the room. I attached 2x4s to the doors and screwed them to a metal bed frame. The finishing touch? A coat of bright green paint.

Karen Cooper
DEPUTY DIRECTOR



GRAND PLAIN → KITCHEN ISLAND

Island: We pulled out the now-working soundcard and kept and removed the keys (saved for a future project); then added a brass screw in its end to support the stone counter-top.

Gary and Karen Thompson
STORY THOMPSONS, HOUSTON, TEXAS



WOODEN BOAT → GUEST BED

"The idea of turning a boat into a bed came to us while driving home from our vacation house in Old Forge, New York. We spotted our former soccering Poms then happened to see one on the side of the road for \$500 and didn't pass it up. We ripped out the engine and seats, cut off the back, and built a simple box frame for the mattress. As projects go, it wasn't heavy, but now it's where all our guests want to sleep."

Kevin and Mia Madine
JOURNAL OF DOCUMENTATION



TRAMPOLINE PIT → OUTDOOR LOUNGE

After struggling for 2 hours trying to extract the under-black-walrus from its den, I assigned a pod behind our new house. I had a better idea: Turn it into a cozy hangout space. First, I raised the walls with 2x4s, then built out the benches. I pulled the weeds, laid gravel, and installed the fire pit. One thing is for sure: Our lovely house (throughout life) is a warm and cozy place.

Douglas Carson
SALT LAKE CITY



Save here, splurge there

A little penny pinching can pay off big. Just ask these savvy readers, who found a way to afford some laggin'-ticket items in their remodel without breaking the bank. Read on to learn how they did it. —KATHLEEN



SPLURGE Custom cabinetry COST \$11,900



HOW THEY SAVED
“We wanted custom cabinetry to complement the look of our 2003 home. We knew that we were only going to do this once, so we did it right: We saved money by recruiting friends and family to install a support beam and remove old brickwork. In return for their labor, we helped them with their projects.”

Jason and Shannon Perrone
WETHERFIELD, CONNECTICUT

SPLURGE Quartzite countertops COST \$5,670



HOW SHE SAVED
“Lower design allows us to easily change wall color—much easier on the walls and cabinet pulls—but we knew that the countertop design needed to last for a long time. We decided on quartzite. To save money, we kept our existing cabinets and modified it to fit the new floor plan. We also bought floor models for the oven and range.”

Margaret Stamatis
ROCKFORD, CONNECTICUT

SPLURGE Kitchen island COST \$7,000



HOW THEY SAVED
“I built the island of our dream with a granite-countertop. Jason did the kitchen demolition while I was at work.”

Jason and Shannon Perrone
WETHERFIELD, CONNECTICUT

SPLURGE Handcrafted tiles COST \$3,200



HOW SHE SAVED
“We went to tile a friend. Heidi's Contacts for the bath is our Craftsman fireplace, but they were over our budget, so we selected other projects to save to afford them.”

Heidi Schubert
SALT LAKE CITY

SPLURGE Pro-style range COST \$5,000



HOW HE SAVED
“I had a chef's assistant help me. I found the lowest price online, ordered a test stove to match it, as I didn't have to pay for delivery. I'd ask contractor friends for advice. Like how to bring it myself. I'd do it myself and give them a recipe as thanks.”

Dave Walters
DRIFTON, NEW JERSEY

Dust-busting musts

When asked the hardest part of a renovation, This Old House readers often answer: “The dust!” Here, California cleaning pro Jeff Muey offers tips on how to breathe easier post construction.

Wipe DOWN SURFACES. Pick up as much dust as you can (and knock the rest to the floor) by using a microfiber window washer on walls and ceilings. Forward-to-clean places like the knobs of a pot range, use a dry soft-bristle paintbrush, which also works wonders along base molding.

VACUUME EVERYWHERE. Run a HEPA filter vacuum with a soft-bristle brush attachment over all surfaces. If you don't have one, it's worth renting the backpack model to avoid dragging it around and scraping new floors.

FRESH WITH WATER. Wipe down every surface you can reach with a slightly damp reusable microfiber cloth, except for flat fresh walls and ceilings. If walls were recently painted, wait until the paint has cured (at least two weeks) before wiping with a damp cloth.



ILLUSTRATION: JEFF MUEY



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She put the party on wheels!

Katrina Sullivan
SACRAMENTO,
CALIFORNIA

"This cart is such a handy addition to our yard. We use it all the time!"

YUM! Reader Katrina Sullivan loves to entertain so lately on the patio of their \$300K ranch. She also knows her way around a tool kit, as shown on her blog at cheerfulhouse.com. So when she couldn't find an outdoor serving cart that was exactly what she wanted, she satfully decided to build one herself, using a deck ladder and her handy pocket-bolt jig. To make it mobile, she added casters on one side and tapered the legs of the other using a water saw. She painted the base of the cart deck gray to complement her house exterior, topped it with stained cherry boards, and added an entire-long drawer pull (a side table for a dish towel). (To find the full how-to, go to cheerfulhouse.com/oct2015.) Now she's got a cart that easily does double duty as beverages and food prep station. "We wheel it out to serve drinks for birthday parties and use it as a buffet area for late night," says Katrina. "It's a wonderful feeling to build something you use every day!"



TLC for painted wood floors

Ever since we showed how to paint a checkerboard pattern on a floor (cheerfulhouse.com/oct2015) readers like Maria Frutos of Seattle have been inspired to follow suit—that's her take, it flows. Here are a few dos and don'ts for keeping painted floors looking fresh. —HENDLEY BASCOCK

DON'T USE WATER Soaking a hardwood floor with a wet mop is a no-no, even if it's painted. Avoid steam mops too. The moisture and heat can damage the floorboards.

DO DUST Pros recommend using a vacuum cleaner with an attachment that doesn't have a beater bar. For everyday cleaning, use a microfiber sweeper. Push the sweeper in one direction, then pull back and forth. Ground-in dust and sand will wear down a floor's finish as the more you do it, the better.

DON'T USE WAX Certain wax-based polishes can leave behind residue, wax-based cleaners can even strip your floor. Use a no-wax floor cleaner or a water-based polish instead.

DO TOUCH UP Soy or oil or discolored spots? Lightly sand and retouch with paint. Finish with two coats of polyurethane that matches the color of the rest of the floor.

HE MAKES *tough messes* WISH THEY WERE NEVER MADE.



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home solutions salvage style

They put a spin on tin

To appreciate the beauty of embossed metalities, you usually have to look up. Three clever readers show how these vintage ceiling squares can shine in other parts of the house. —H.A.



Beth artwork

"When I found one gleaming tile panel at a salvage yard, I decided to make it the focal point of my bath. I carefully traced and brushed through existing holes in the tile to find out if it was just hanging in a picture."

Corry Hicks

WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA



Kitchen backsplash

"We loved the pattern of these tiles that we found on eBay. To protect their patina, we coated them with a clear spray lacquer. We trimmed the edges so that they would fit and mounted them on plywood with black sheet metal screws, then filled in around the tiles with wood trim."

Keith Strangiel
BUFFALO, NEW YORK



Cabinet-door inserts

"I swapped out the glass on my kitchen cabinet doors for vintage ceiling tiles from a thrift store. The tiles were cut so that the design centered in the existing cabinet and attached from behind with rubber clips. I sealed the panels with dark wax. They look clutter while preserving the rustic vibe of our kitchen."

Shannon Kamm

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They made a farmhouse fresh

Items salvaged from old mills and barns become the floors, ceiling, and shelves in this couple's rustic kitchen

BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EDDINS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MERI LONG

Reader tip:
even the
dump can
yield treasure



Jeremiah and Felisha McAfee
BIGFOOT, MONTANA
"You can save thousands
by doing it yourself."

WHEN THE McAFEEs BOUGHT their 1930s Montana farmhouse, they gutted every single surface down to the old, frayed wiring and rotting sheetrock. "We sacrificed two years of a social life and six seasons, but it was well worth it," Felisha says. The result? A head-buck getaway that epitomizes farmhouse style, and, on a shoestring budget, too. Jeremiah volunteered at a salvage yard to get wood (and the corrugated steel for the ceiling) for free. Felisha hand-painted old-fashioned signs. These TGH readers also scored dirt-cheap for colored stainless for the again-shedding Jeremiah made. "We even found that stainless-steel farmhouse sink at a garage sale for \$200!" so their dream home look is your own kitchen, read on.

glass guards

"I inherited this picture from a beloved family friend. They're my favorite decor item," Felisha says. The framed glass-paned windowed right here instead had about potential \$45 and \$25 per pane.



striped runner

A colorful cotton rug brightens up the kitchen floor and adds coziness underfoot. 2 1/2 by 8-foot rug, \$102 (chandeliers.com/sale/sale.htm)



whitewashed island

Felisha found this 19th-century white-painted island at a local antique shop. She had it refinished and added storage and a sturdy heavy top. \$450 (overstock.com)



vintage tin

A farmhouse built post-harvest and the kitchen some of the post—and it's great place to stack coffee or tea. We bought this well-used tin for \$15.



homespun signs

Why go hand-me-down? Felisha's designs, painted in-house and added to the mix here and there for a worn effect. Use \$10 (reveland.com/sale/sale.htm)



colorful mixing bowls

From red to classic farmhouse blue, ceramic bowls are perfect for any home cook. \$3 (99-9799, buttegood.com for stores)



reclaimed-wood shelving

To create Jeremiah's headboard-style shelves, we started with a blue piece of 2x4-inch thick salvaged wood (we'll give the top 10 inches the simple bracket, so cut 1x3-pieces at 45° and 90° angles, then used wood glue and 2-inch-long wood screws to fasten it all together. Thoroughly sanded edges and a coat of clear-seal (Furniture) paint.



shaggy pitchers

These throwback pitchers add vintage charm. Enamel pitcher, \$15 (99-9799, buttegood.com for stores). Ceramic pitcher, \$22 (homegoods.com for stores)



coated pendant light

Like an Edison bulb in this off-white brass fixture for \$10 (we bought this metal cage pendant for \$10 from the glass line, top accidental damage \$30 (furniture.com)



high-arc faucet

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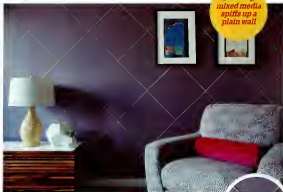
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They took a fresh tack

Blond white walls and a wallpaper-averse landlord inspire a young couple to harness their color and fiber-arts know-how

BY CECILIAH BULLOVIN



*(under cover)
mixed media
spills up a
plain wall*



**Joe and
Maya Hanna**

NEW YORK CITY

"People love
the wall's subtle
3-D quality"

WHEN YOUR HOME'S NOT YOUR OWN, there's only so much you can do to alter its look. Joe and Maya Hanna, who live in a downtown's white apartment, were wishing to put up wallpaper in their living room, but figured it'd be safer to opt for paint—with a twist. After sampling a few colors and settling on an moody grey-purple, Joe, an interior designer, noticed a ball of cotton yarn near to Maya's knitting needles, its golden hue and pleasing texture suggesting a scheme. Soon he found himself measuring the wall to create a penciled grid of oversized diamonds. After premixing upholstery inks, pausing in at each corner, he painted the wall and pushed the tacks in a bit more. Then, starting in the lower right corner, he wore the yarn left, then right, then left, until he'd worked his way across. "The first time, I ran out halfway through," he says. "So I took it all off, bought a new roll, and started again." Joe complemented the purple hue by fixing an IKEA cabinet with richly toned wooden slats. "If we ever move out, I hope the next tenant will want to keep it," he says of the recent wall. "If not," he notes, "the paint can go into Maya's next knitting project." ■



Textured touch: Joe wrapped cotton yarn around the upholstery inks to make the ultimate pattern. Photo: Benjamin Moore's Village Owners



2

Burns apertax
DANIELLE BURNS
PRAIRIE, ILL.

Materials: Painted resin
Size: 4" W x 9" D x 10" H
Highlights: Antlers
Notes: Burning Deer has a minimalist, modern, painted-resin style. \$94; burningdeer.com

3x one safari

LAURENCE
NEW YORK
Materials: Painted resin
Size: 5" W x 12" D x 18" H
Notes: Features green highlights every field on the antlers and back of the head. \$220; www.safaridecor.com

3



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items



4

4x tall order

DEALING
MADE IN THE USA
Size: 12" W x 12" D x 12" H
Materials: Resin. To keep neck and antlers from breaking, the giraffe will need an elegant support piece. \$140; dealing.com

5x stripes

DEALING
MADE IN THE USA
Size: 12" W x 12" D x 12" H
Highlights: A tapestry of red, white, and black stripes. To keep the head from breaking, the giraffe will need an elegant support piece. \$140; dealing.com

5



6



7



8

8x trunk show

HOMES DECORATIVE
COLLECTION
Materials: Resin
Size: 12" W x 4" D x 27" H
Highlights: Antlers of the
trunk show are made of
resin and antlers are made
of wood. \$240; homesdecorative.com



9

6x head all about

CONTEMPORARY
Size: 12" W x 12" D x 12" H
Highlights: The head
is made of resin and
antlers are made of
wood. \$140; www.allabout.com

7x bold graphics

ARTIST
Size: 12" W x 12" D x 12" H
Highlights: An abstract
graphic design. The
head is made of resin
and antlers are made
of wood. \$140; www.artists.com

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He's a backyard hero

While deployed 7,500 miles from home, this reader designed his dream backyard on paper, then spent months building it

BY SAI KAGUCHA • PHOTOGRAPHS BY LISA KOSMIGER



(reader wisdom)
outdoor
hangouts
keep a family
close



Juan Zetino
CARMELITO,
CALIFORNIA

"This was a lot—the yard wasn't easy to construct when I'm home."

WHEN IT COMES TO TRANSFORMING a backyard, most often do it over time—add some plants one year, follow up with landscaping the next—until the space is complete. It's the rare homeowner who formulates a plan, then executes it like clockwork. But *The Old Mouse* reader Juan Zetino did just that after spending about a year designing his ultimate yard.

Back in August 2009, Juan and his wife, Vicki, moved into their first home, a stucco ranch in Carmelito, California, about 15 miles from the naval base where he is stationed. The house's interior was move-in ready for the family of five, but the backyard wasn't as welcoming. "The yard was plain," he says. "No one went out there to hang out." As a Seabee, a member of the construction arm of the Navy engineering corps responsible for building military fortifications, Juan is skilled in carpentry and bridge engineering. He planned to redo the yard before a scheduled deployment to Guam that coming March, but a Christmas Day phone call changed things. Three weeks later he was in Afghanistan's northern Balkh province for the start of his first tour there. The backyard would have to wait.



BEFORE While it had grass, the plot is backyard warm I leveling.

AFTER The paved patio, a grapevine-covered pergola and an outdoor kitchen give Juan and his family reason to spend outside.

The real pregnancy test: remodeling

What better time to rip out the kitchen than when there's a bun in the oven?

Your guide to getting it all done. Sort of. ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER AND MARIA JOSEY



IT'S NOT JUST THE THRILL of having a child—it's the uncontrollable urge to finally finish the attic. And sweep in a new kitchen sink, with a better faucet and a powder backpack, and maybe a new range while you're at it.

For most known only as Mother Nature, nothing focuses attention on home improvements quite like the unannounced arrival of offspring. Call it birdwising, or perhaps the pressure of a truly unmettable deadline. Every year, when you send no-returns for the older remodel issue, we hear without fail from couples who somehow, by some twist of logic they wouldn't be able to explain themselves, decided to usher in a newborn by, say, installing miniature coasters on the nursery on-line—in the middle of the night—or replacing a frozen gas pedal of the mother birth after initially thinking all it needed was new towels.

In the spirit of childbirth, if not the frank recognition of a genuine syndrome, we offer this pregnancy planner for inspiring parents.

First trimester

Weeks 1-4

- *Hi, life, so pleasant, so simple...*
- *Wowaaa?* Two dark blue lines are positive, right? *Oh my gosh! Eeek!* Terrifying! Remodeling!
- Text handyman. Need to convert closet to nursery, STAT!

Weeks 5-8

- Call future grandparents with blessed news: ask if they can handle demolition.
- With no closet, where to store the Bugabo? Scratch that: Will carry kid. Can I afford stroller and remodel?
- Empty house of all chemicals: commit to buying cleaning products derived only from expeller-pressed chrysanthenums.
- Handyman Mike. Find that scrap of paper with painter/Ange's list. What's with this date? Home office may need redo.
- Test photo of new stair railing to GC from Ange's list. Can he come over right away?

Weeks 9-13

- Hear paint is a bear-facet—this is

really happening!

- Do GCs not text? And why are their home phones not listed? May need help with crib assembly, also with designing and building out new second-floor layout.

Second trimester

Weeks 14-17

- Google "easy install no VOC wallpaper with animal themes and purple colorway."
- Still no word from GC: Google "DIY building tips"—no, make that: especially reliable handypersons.
- Start list of baby names ("Why does 'Ange' keep popping up?")

Weeks 18-21

- Hire "Miracle Mike" to convert closet and assemble crib. Be very specific about deadline.
- Expose baby to color therapy by propping paint swatches on baby. One tick mark: loves it? or hates it?
- Ultrasound. It's a girl!

Weeks 22-24

- Closet demo done, undisturbed. Let's nomenclature Mike!



► Buy Tunes

- Ask boss for maternity leave. Buy bigger pants, also bigger wet/dry vac.

Weeks 25-28

- Where a Mike? Nursery still needs drywall—and maybe a window.
- Download crib assembly tips.
- Would LOVE LOVE LOVE a glass of chardonnay. Ormer.
- Ask friends how to baby-proof kitchen. May need to gut it.

Third trimester

Weeks 29-32

- Not responding to REPEATED. Pay house call: assure him Mike's services befit loved into a noose. Him that dares able to assemble crib.
- Order kit for books from Baby, size 0. Also: Red Wing work boots from Amazon size 7. No, make it 8—best are swelling.
- Help best friend plan baby shower. Hint that guests should dress for a jointing party.

- Fit both facets, which starts leaking whenever in there, which is now CONSTANTLY.

Weeks 33-36

- Prepare punchlist for closet-to-nursery conversion.
- Track down name of the purple that lady at prenatal class wore—not quite Deep Caneer, not quite Eggplant Melody either.
- Double-check handy. Maybe she can help fix ceiling, too?
- Bath faucet has gotten go. Varsity should too. Check Pinterest for tile options.

Weeks 37-40

- Crib not coming together. Buy dimensional lumber to craft one from scratch.
- Stay up till 3 a.m. installing new faucet and medicine cabinet. Find good samples under drop cloth inside new winery—how'd they get there?

D-day

- Solar, nothing!
- Finish nursery, fit head on over.
- Use downtime to reorganize kitchen islands and alphabetize spices.
- One finish crib later. Rehub dresser drawer for baby's welcome home.

Eight days past due date

- Seems awfully warm these days. Withstanding beyond sunburning of ladder while installing ceiling fan. Living on contract toes?
- Practice breathing.
- Contemplate cancer switch; world needs fewer lawyers; more design-build experts.
- Was that a shocker: uh-oh, down the ladder and to the hospital!
- Don't forget car seat, baby blanket, spouse, and len cloth—closet needs new paint color scheme.

Inspired by the stories of Andrea Fox and daughter Ann, Julie Turner and daughter Elizabeth, Rebecca Haffel, and others. Illustrations by Peter and Maria Josey. Photo: iStockphoto.com/Mark Miller. Photo: iStockphoto.com/Mark Miller.

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This Old House TV

The things they saved

A stripped-down Queen Anne comes back to life with the help of original details, some refurbished and some found

BY KATHERINE BICER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TELAJ



*Inside without
old timbers
connect you
to the past*



**Katherine
Bicer and
husband
Murray**
BILIMET
MASSACHUSETTS

"The first time
we stepped
through the door,
it felt like we
were home."

I HAVE A FASCINATION with the things people have lived with and loved. Our quest with this house, which we're thrilled to be the new season of *This Old House*, is to reuse as many old details as possible. Of course we're making changes—adding a porch and a mudroom, putting in a new kitchen, and redoing the bedroom upstairs. But we love knowing that elements that have always been here will continue to be a part of the house, a part of our home.

Even though my husband, Murray, and I are from very different parts of the world—he grew up in an apartment building in Ankara, Turkey, and I grew up in a 1930s two-story in Norman, Oklahoma—we both treasure treasured objects. We bought a pair of vintage stained-glass windows at an antique shop 10 years ago,

HOMING HISTORY

This season, *This Old House* general contractor Tom Silva and the crew are renovating an 1895 Queen Anne in Belmont, Massachusetts (BICER/TELAJ). Homeowners Bicer and Katherine Bicer acquired a historical home in which to raise their young son and daughter (ABOVE) and give to future as many of the original details as possible. Including, some in his son's room. Katherine is sitting up (TOP LEFT).

GOOD WOOD

RIGHT Ben Buckley of Silver Brothers Construction connects a new subframe to a reinforced divided-light window casch.

FAR RIGHT Tom Silver works on an original door that he and TCM master carpenter Brian Adams disassembled, cut down, and rebuilt, refacing its width from 36 inches to 24 inches to fit the original floor joist spans.



right after we were married. We had no real use for them, but we loved the design and the color of the glass, so we kept them as decoration in the two condos we lived in.

We must have a thing about windows, because that's one of the reasons you bought this house. The first time we stepped in the door, we felt like we were home. The whole house was bathed in sunlight. There were no many windows, most of them original and with imperfect, wavy glass, which just makes such gorgeous light. As we walked around the house, we saw detail after detail that we loved.

We lived in the house for six months before starting the renovation, and despite the winter drafts decided to keep those old windows, nearly 40 in all. Our architect, Matthew Cummings, and [TCM TV general contractor] Tim Silver supported our decision, and the cost would be compensated by replacements. We kept all the masonry in Oldie Bostonian, where they are being recycled,

repaired, reglazed, and repainted. Here at the house, the window walls are being scraped, a nail rot and damage fixed. The windows will get weatherstripping where there was none, but the big improvement will be the new triple-track storm windows, which have two storms and a screen bulkie, so we don't have to swap out for another with the season. Tom says a well-sealed single-pane window with a good quality storm is just as efficient as a new double-pane window. So our 1895 windows will get 2015 performance.

It's the best of both worlds, and we're trying to achieve that with other decisions as well. There were things that had been hidden or covered up or removed over the years, and we want to bring those elements back. There were old doors in place and also masonry in the basements—doors with screens, doors with wind over, wood-paneled doors. We're going to be able to use original five-panel doors in almost every room, but there's such an assortment of hardware, we're still working out how to find what we'd like to figure out how to



organize the hardware by style—for example, use floor with all crystal doorknobs, another floor with all brass—instead of having to replace all the knobs. Consistency throughout the house doesn't matter to us as much as using the same pieces that people have used to open the doors once and over again for years.

We're also creating simple brass sconces that were in various places around the house. When the wall was opened up around our sconce, you could see the history of lighting technology: gas, low, knob and tube, copper wiring. We love that. Two of these sconces are going at the master suite.

Our suite will also get a refurbished claw-foot tub and a restored marble vanity top, both of which lived in a second-floor bath. The tub was so beat up, we weren't sure it could be saved, but it's going to add so much warmth and charm to the room.

All these original items mean so much to us. Matt says that if you live in a house that's been around longer than you have, it makes you feel part of the neighborhood, like you belong. It's so true. And every thing that belongs in the house is part of what makes us feel that we belong here too. ■



SALVAGE FINDS LEFT This antique stained glass window is one of a pair the Silver brothers salvaged in nearby towns. It'll grace the master suite.

BOTTOM Kallstrom brought 30 vintage cast-iron fire pulls knowing they will add period charm to the kitchen.



OPPOSITE The Silver brothers' cast-iron pulls are a subtle nod to the new fireplace in the living room.

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They took a page from us

Plenty of people are happy just flipping through *This Old House*, but these determined DIY'ers didn't stop there.

BY MEGAN BAKER AND DEBORAH SALEMEN

HOMEOWNER TO DO LISTS tend to run from the scariest to the mundane. But some of you like to think big. Alongside "replace HEPA filter" and "buy lightbulbs," you might add "master woodworking skills" and "build a house!" While poring over the submissions to our reader-remodel contest, we were struck by the many projects that began with a how-to in *TOH*. You've interested us with your skills and impressed us with the creative end you've done around problems. And we're grateful for the trust you place in us to guide you along the way. As Tom Rife (see his cabinets on the next page) wrote, "In doing all the work ourselves, as remodelers know, you build everything twice in your mind and then physically constructing everything. Fear of the unknown always plays a part. But *TOH* alleviates those fears." I'll hand off to all you dreamers—and to this sampling of your DIY during-do



*(reader advice)
bring home
an idea
and make it
your own*

rolled on a stair runner

Heather Thibodeau
LIMESVILLE, MARYLAND

THE INSPIRATION "11 Ways to Give Your Home a Personal Stamp," May 2013, and "Adela Ignites Without Carpet or Rails," May 2009

THE ADAPTATION While updating her family's finished basement, elevated Duffer and blogger Heather (heatherthibodeau.com) wanted to brighten the staircase. She and husband Steve began by removing wood to open up the area. After consulting the instructions in the corner dust landing with slippy-able oak, Heather took a belt sander to the worn pine treads. Luckily "there were no nail holes, the treads were already painted, and because we were sanding, the wood didn't have to be perfect." The couple primed the steps and put down two coats of white patch and gel coat floor paint. "We used a FrogTape to create the effect of a runner, sealing the edges with the base color so the second color couldn't bleed under." It's been two years, Heather notes, "and it still looks pretty good."



crafted oak cabinets



Tom Rife
NORTH CANTON, OHIO
THE INSPIRATION "In Fine Detail,"
January/February 2008

THE ADAPTATION Professional baker and lifelong *Officer Tom* and his wife, Sue, lived with their 1940s kitchen for 35 years before she was able to remodel it. Cabinets of neatly pressed quarters were the ask on full display in the January/February 2008 issue, were upstaged in the couple's plans. Armed with a computer-aided saw, and aided by close friend and mentor Mark Soper, Tom made not only the bones but also the face frames, floor panels, miter, and miter. Then he completed each door by gluing on eight 1/4 inch wide strips. "Including the panel, that's 13 pieces per face," he says, "and there are 20 doors. It is simple construction, but it's solid—people are amazed to think I made them."



dressed up the fireplace



Ashley and Bret Farris
CARROLLTON, TEXAS

THE INSPIRATION "Fireplace Face-Off for Just \$55,"
January/February 2013

THE ADAPTATION The plain painted fireplace in their 1980s ranch begged Ashley, who prefers the look of natural stone and traditional trim. After single-handedly stripping off the paint, she worked with Bret to recreate the mantel in the January/February 2013 Budget Reno. "We weren't doing Officers before we bought our house, and we acquired tools slowly," she says. They used their new table saw to cut pieces and a shelf out of MDF, shopped at a home center for MDF molding, then installed the assembly with glue, masonry screws, and a nail gun. All things considered, says Ashley, "I think we did a good job of making it look as if it has always been there." Agreed.

sculpted a garden



Jim and Cynthia Carroll
MOORESTOWN, NEW JERSEY

THE INSPIRATION "Pests on Palms," April 2009

THE ADAPTATION After digging out an ivy-covered weed from the April 2009 issue for a uniquely curvy corner border garden, the proud couple, proud couple revamped their backyard with foliage-creating two well-established trees like a green/yellow eight. "We had difficulty growing grass there," says Jim, "so our choices were to stretch a hammock or create an environment that wouldn't be mowing." The article got them thinking about shape, structure, and layers, as well as texture and color. "Before, they were a blank slate," Cynthia says. Today it boasts Japanese Holly rhododendron, lime, and flowering bulbs, and the foliage keeps it lush practically year-round.



set off a home office



Jason Austin
LIBERTY, NORTH CAROLINA

THE INSPIRATION "Build a Columned Room Divider," January/February 2013

THE ADAPTATION Jason "wanted to give something back" to his parents, Emma and Robert, so he cramped out at his childhood home, in Danville, Virginia, long enough to carry out its first redo since 1975. His room and dad's wish list included a columned office area with light flowing through, so he replaced a wall with four columned room divider. "I fell in love with the one in the magazine," he says of the January/February 2013 how-to, "and built it pretty much to the specs." His own departure, using a box of printed and clear-coated wood Shelves, and an armchair on the side opposite the office served as a reading nook. Jason is particularly speechless when they visit. "They've given me as much," he says. "I'm glad I could do something for them." ■





You folks sure can pinch a penny!

We salute our 2015 champions of cheap—equal parts genius and thrifty—who refuse to accept the concept of full price. ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREG CLARK



*(Reader survey)
Not paying
retail saved
a whopping
\$27,065*

Barbie goes prime time



Katherine Meadors HENRY, CALIFORNIA
I took a big old TV that didn't work, gutted it with a butter knife and wire cutters, and made a Barbie Dreamhouse for my daughter. Fifteen Barbies live there now.
What Katherine saved: \$174



Hey, you gonna keep that?
Susanne Long LOVELA, CALIFORNIA
While visiting a home show, we passed a beautiful, lighted composite deck on display. It looked like we could play it night, day in our front yard, so I asked the man who was

working there if it was for sale. He said it was—for half price. We got a U-Haul truck, and the men at the show broke down the deck and loaded it up for us.
What Susanne saved: \$2,500

Pinning for the perfect floor



Ken Karra PLYMOUTH, IOWA
When remodeling our 1950s lake cottage, we wanted wide-plank wood floors but could afford nothing we found at local retailers. In our search, we discovered 8-inch-wide French-tongue-and-groove pine planks normally used as knotty pine wall paneling. There's a

decorative V-notch on one side, but the back is perfectly flat. So! We laid the planks back side up and face-nailed each board to prevent cupping. We sanded the installed floor with evened circular sander, then applied two coats of high-build floor varnish. The total cost finished was about \$2.50 per square foot.
What Ken saved: \$4,500

It's all in the details



Jennifer Monaghan OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA
I couldn't justify spending money on snowboard cover, so I ordered to give the plain

felt front door of my 1914 Craftsman new dimension and character. I decided to add eiderite detail. I went down to the lumber store and took a sample of eiderite molding. I nailed it to the front door, caulked and painted it red—voilà!—free-ours appeal!
What Jennifer saved: \$2,000

Concrete chic



Charli Holloway MADISON, WISCONSIN
We wanted to create a warm and cozy space in our unfinished basement for our college student daughter to enjoy when she's at home. We didn't have the time or money for a full renovation, so we decided to attempt a loft-like atmosphere. We started by covering the poured concrete walls with joint compound to create faux-brick walls. I used a level as a guide and drew the grid lines with my finger. After it dried, I painted the raised areas to resemble bricks. To finish this look, we painted the concrete floor to simulate weathered planks. She loves it! All told, we bought seven buckets of joint compound (\$70), 3 gallons and 4 quarts of paint (\$340).
What Charli saved: \$6,420

Lighting tricks



Diana Shepton ALMA, MICHIGAN
When it came to lighting for our kitchen remodel, we had to get creative. I found supplies to make a couple of sconces from an online lighting parts dealer, and my husband did the wiring. I spray-painted some of

the metal in dark gray, some in brushed nickel, and some in left in the original brass, for a mixed metal look. It was quite an education since I didn't know a sconce was from a sconce before we began!
What Diana saved: \$370

Going to great lengths



Anna Douglas SOUTH BEND, INDIANA
We found a family-owned outdoor Wisconsin that could manufacture stones for our outdoor fireplace at \$4.25 a square foot versus the \$15.75 we'd been quoted by a local supplier. My husband, youngest son, and I took our truck and a Barbie trailer on a beautiful seven-hour round trip to pick up our bargain stones. On the drive back, we had dinner at an adorable family restaurant and shopped at an antique store, where I found the coolest vintage park—it's now a part of my laundry room.
What Anna saved: \$5,860

A money-saving resolution



Edwin Mills LITTLETON, COLORADO
Right after New Year's, I went to our home center to talk about options for my kitchen renovation. The employee I spoke with let me in on a little secret: Winter is slow period for their subcontractors, because most folks are paying off holiday bills. He secured my business; they offered me a 25 percent discount off the total price to have granite counters installed and my cabinets refaced.
What Edwin saved: about \$10,000

Harvesting house parts



Beverly Harbice INTERLAKEN, NEW YORK
We needed a new handrail in our back entry. We had recently cleared trees on our property, and there was a hophornbeam tree with a trunk the perfect diameter. My son cut it down to size, stripped the bark, and sanded the wood. No finish was applied, but it has a nice patina from "palm" oil. We now have a unique, interesting handrail, decorated with insect swags and holes, at no cost. I bought the sturdy brackets at a reuse store. Total cost, \$3, plus lunch for my son.
What Beverly saved: \$90.36



SEEMINGLY BELIEVING
First survey of our readers' creativity!
What House
saved \$27,065



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weekend remodel

You love this vintage touch

Taking a cue from reader remodels, we decided to retrofit a charming old bureau for a whole new purpose.

BY PAUL HOPE • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TISUE

(reader tip)
 convert a
 dresser
 into a bath
 vanity



COST \$25 plus the
 dresser sale and top
TIME Two days
DIFFICULTY Moderate (see
 a pro for fabricating the top)



Caleb Kettler
 WOOLAND
 PARK
 COLORADO

"I didn't want
 anything like
 evermore there"

"I WAS LOOKING FOR ANTIQUE DRESSERS on Pinterest when I stumbled across people using them as vanities," says reader Caleb Kettler, who decided to make one himself. "The cruxiest part is fixing in the plumbing." Indeed, to make way for the trap, you'll have to modify the drawers. Who better to demonstrate how to do that than *The Old House* master carpenter Norm Abram? Now, his version of the project is pretty involved: the dresser base is all curved openings, and it got a new top of marble with a drop-in sink, requiring more modifications. You can make an easier go of it by plugging a vessel sink right on top of a rectangular piece. Either way, the approach is the same. See for yourself as Norm walks you through the steps to adding a truly original focal point to your bath, all while preserving a precious bit of dresser space.

Project: *Reader's Digest*
 Country: *USA*
 Collection: *USA*
www.houzz.com



4 Add the blocking

A) Get the slide blocking. The grooved dresser drawers sit on wooden guide rails. To update the dresser drawers with optional heavy-duty slides, install blocking flush below the leg framing. First, measure between the front and back of the dresser frame just above the wooden guide, as shown. Cut a 1x4 to that length. Make 1x4 blocking for the other side the same way.

B) Install the slide blocking. Add spacers to fill the gap between the blocking and the dresser, securing them with glue and brads. Wedge a cut 1x4 below the leg framing just above the wooden guide on each side, and toenail the ends into the framing. Use the hammer and pry bar to remove the old wooden drawer guides.

5 Attach the drawer slides

A) Get the drawer rail. Follow the slide installation instructions to position the inner rail against the side of the drawer. Check that the hardware is square to the back of the drawer, and mark the pre-punched holes on the blocking. Hold the rail against wall, secure it to the drawer with the included 1/8-inch wood screws. Repeat the process on the other drawer side.

B) Secure the slide to the drawer. Measure below the drawer's crosspiece according to the slide's installation instructions, and mark final spot on the blocking. Define the slide rail from the back to access the screws, and hold the track in place with its top edge at your mark. Fasten one side of the track to the support with an included screw. Squeeze up the track before driving a second screw, then drive screws through the remaining holes. Install the slide on the other side in the same way.

C) Add the drawer supports. Use the hammer and pry bar to remove the center drawer guide from the bottom of the dresser frame. Measure and cut two pieces of 1/2-inch-thick scrap to connect the front and back of the dresser frame. The supports should rest on the back of the frame and be flush with the front edge of the drawer. Space them under the new drawer sides, glue down the supports and tack the ends in place with 1/4-inch brads.



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6 Reattach the drawer face

A) Make the face braces. To attach the face of the upper drawer, make L-shaped braces. First, cut 3-inch pieces of 1x2 and glue them together, edge to face, in an L shape, as shown. Tack the pieces together with 2x4 back braces. Make four braces, two for each side of the drawer face.

B) Attach the face. Hold the face of the upper drawer in place on the dresser, and position a brace in the corner where it meets the drawer frame. Tack the brace to the back and drill a pilot hole through the brace and into the face of the drawer. Repeat the brace on the other side corners. Screw the brace to the dresser frame and install the remaining braces. Slide the lower drawer in place.



7 Install the vanity

A) Secure the piece. Position your new vanity in the bathroom. Its back edge, about 2 1/2 inches off the wall. Use the stud finder to locate stud locations and cut two pieces of 2x4 wrap. Align the wrap with those marks and screw through the back of the vanity into each 2x4 with a pair of 3-inch wood screws. Push the vanity against the wall and drive angled pilot hole through each 2x4 and into wall stud, and fasten it with a 3-inch wood screw.

B) Trim the sink hole. Once the marble countertop is cut for the drop-in sink, have a carpenter make a curved cut in cross support in the dresser frame. If your installation requires a similar cut, set a compass to the width of the sink rim and follow the opening, marking a curved outline on the cross support. Follow along the line with a jigsaw.

C) Install the sink. Dry fit the sink in the opening in the countertop. If it still hits the crosspiece, remove the sink and continue to trim the crosspiece until it fits. Once it does, run a bead of silicone caulk on the underside of the sink's perimeter and press the sink in place. Install the drain and faucet and make the plumbing connections. ■

TIP
To ease installation, attach your fixtures before dropping the sink in.



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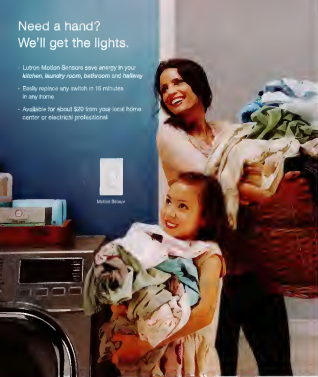
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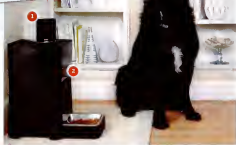
HOME SMART HOME

Reader Impact!
how to get
your home
connected

Meet the Johnsons—Jason, Sue, and son Jake—and see how app-controlled gadgets are making life at home easier (even for their dog, Max) while cutting energy costs. What works for them can work for you, too. Turn the page to learn how



the Johnson family



HEY, HUDDY, HOW R U?

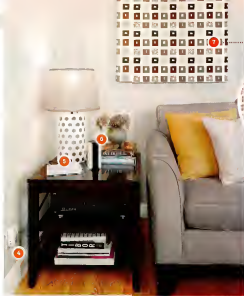
(1) Petcube's Interactive Wi-Fi Pet Camera (\$199) lets you watch in your smartphone or you talk to your pet via a two-way audio. "I've definitely been caught paying with Max, eating chocolate," admits Jason (SMET, for real).

(2) Petcube's SmartFeeder (\$199) alerts when there's still food in the bowl, so if you're away, it'll alert you when it's empty. It'll also alert you if you're not home.

Jason Johnson was

at work one day when an app on his smartphone alerted him that his garage door was open. He knew that his wife wasn't home and anyone could easily grab their bikes or even try to break into the house. So he tapped a button within the app, and the garage door—several miles away—closed and locked. He switched apps and checked the live feeds from three different video cameras for intruders in his modest 1987 Edwardian home, switched apps again and made sure the front door was locked. Satisfied, he peeked at a calendar feed to see if his dog was in his food bowl. The truth? Max had been there, Jason could have played a remote game of laser tag with him.

Like any devout San Francisco-based tech entrepreneur, Jason owns a smartphone crammed with apps, but 25 of them are dedicated solely to the 1,500-square-foot smart home he shares with his wife, Sue, and young son, Jake.



COME ON IN

LEFT At San Johnson comes within range of the front door, the C31 **August Smart Lock** (\$295) will let his wife's smartphone unlock the door and an app in his is connected to a smart lock to unlock the door. He'll be able to lock the door with his phone, too.

(4) Lutron's Caseta Wireless Plug-In Lamp Dimmer (\$45) lets you control two lamps from the included remote or if connected to Lutron's **SmartBridge** (\$100) from your phone.

(5) Lutron's cordless Pro (\$100) lets you control a ceiling fan with a remote or if connected to Lutron's **SmartBridge** (\$100) from your phone.

Thanks to the apps and the Internet-connected devices they talk to, he can—then anywhere with cell service—control pretty much every system in the house, including locks, lighting, heat, music, movies and smoke detection, plant irrigation, video surveillance, and, yes, canine feeding. Jason is a poster child for the smart-home revolution, and his involvement in tech and not for taking phone given him a decade's head start on the rest of us—making him someone to be grapple with questions like, Do I really need to control my Greek Pot with my smartphone? Think of him as a futurist from the immediate future. For starters, he can tell us what works and what doesn't.

"He's a futurist," says Sue. She's looking at him, not with an admiring eye, across their 1.5-mile gap. "As soon as a device shows up, he opens the box and he's working on it."

He shrugs, pouring a drink to make a cup of coffee from a machine he plucked so that it never needs refilling with water. "First and foremost, it's about convenience," he says. "But then there's the fun and the magic. It's just cool when you come up to your door and it opens for you without a key." Easy for him to say. This is a guy who, when he couldn't find a hands-free deal for his front door, started a company called August that makes smart locks.

But aside from whimsy, Jason says he installed most of the smart-home electronics to save energy—and money (and you can do the same). Lights that automatically switch off, a thermostat that ramps down when no one is home, and water sensors that monitor plant irrigation are all conservation measures that hark back to Jason's legal childhood. "When I saw a light on, water flowing, or heat coming on, to me, that's money," he says. "It's in my DNA not to waste anything."

Johnson has been tinkering with electronics since he was a

66 When I see a light on, water flowing, or heat coming on—to me, that's money. It's in my DNA not to waste anything. 33

JUMP & SHOUT

(6) Canary's full HD security camera (\$249) on an order can stream a live video feed to your smartphone. Avoid a glowing star on your phone's battery life by using its many sensors—like a sudden shift in temperature that could indicate a fire. If you want to remove the video feed, you'll need to buy a separate monthly fee for cloud storage.

(7) iSleep (\$99) is an FM radio player controls in your car that can stream music from your smartphone. It also has a built-in sleep timer and a wake-up timer.



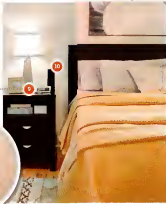
COMFY COZY

(8) Nest's Learning Thermostat (3249) automatically reduces heat (or cooling) while you're away by sensing motion and temperature, so you can override the temperature, saving on energy costs. It also speaks with the Apple app, which prompts you to toggle the thermostat's status—HOME or AWAY—when the door is unlocked or locked.

child, growing upon Portland, Oregon, with a single mother in a house where if broken things weren't fixed, there was no money to replace them. Repeating and jerry-rigging things brought some order and excitement to a hardworking childhood. He says, "Two factors to have the grandfather every little boy should have, with a basement crowded with treasure: sibling time, movies, half-broken things, and millions of tools."

When he and Sue moved in, 10 years ago, Jason immediately set about replacing the 1990s track lighting and installing in-wall speakers, climbing into the attic with a frame to run the wires. "They'd come down covered in black soot, like they'd been crawling in the fireplace," Sue says. Jason figures a cat stove exploded up there at some point.

Through his smart-home journey began with a curious lighting, it has branched out to some vital aspects of family life. Like security. Using door locks, an HD video doorbell, and HD cameras all wirelessly connected to the Internet, he and Sue can monitor the house more readily than via a standard alarm system, while avoiding a monthly fee. They can, for instance, interact with the UPS guy when he rings the



REST, RECHARGE, REDUCE

(9) Radio Shack's long-absent smart X10 Smart Radio lets directly tie in smart switches to turn them off at bedtime. The Johnsons prefer it to a smart plug for having wires in the bedroom—phones, tablets, and televisions.

(10) Amazon's Echo (3149) answers questions about the weather forecast and ship you have on hand in the bedroom—phones, tablets, and televisions.

(11) Lutron's 4-Port USB Charger (325) replaces the dual outlets in a conventional receptacle, creating a handy and uncluttered charging station for a connected family.

(12) Edge's Garden Sensor (3149) monitors key factors to plant health—light, moisture, humidity, soil moisture, and temperature—and sends timely guidance to your smartphone. It's trying to reduce our water usage in the Colorado drought," says Jason.



doorbell, unlock the front door, watch him set the package inside—thank him—and lock the door after he leaves. "I don't feel particularly at risk in San Francisco, and we don't have any valuables jewelry or fancy art in the house," Jason says. "All I care about is keeping my family safe when I'm not home. I can check that the door is locked from my hotel room, and that gives me peace of mind."

Until now, to get such functionality, a homeowner would need to hire a pro to install a proprietary system known mostly to the gated-community set, or sign a contract with a security company or cable provider for a subscription-based monitored system. But this is up part to companies in the mold of August, homeowners can choose to opt in from a marketplace of over 100 devices, some of which talk to each other (and some of which don't).

Jason owned the August Smart Lock when he realized that, between several homekeepers and the contractor renovating the basement, there were lots of keys floating around. With his camera, he or Sue can see their phones go in and out of the house, and also delete it—if, say, their housekeeper ever stops working for them.

One night, despite all the locks and cameras and sensors, the Johnsons did have intruders. Sue heard a racket in the kitchen and typed in, her heart pounding—to find four sneakers among the dog's dish (like Mafu dogs). They'd come in through the dog door, which, she and Jason now observed, was wide enough for a person to crawl through. After anxiously unhooking them out with a broom, Jason set about finding a better solution. He installed a lock-proof door that slides up and down with a whoosh, via a sensor in Matt's office, whenever he approaches. Since then, says



KICK BACK

(13) Logitech's Harmony One Home Remote (\$149.99) is a universal remote that controls all your home entertainment devices through programmable buttons and also adjusts Philips Hue lighting and a Nest thermostat to set the mood.

(14) Apple TV (\$129) is just one of these streaming devices. Jason uses his web browser for watching programming. The others include Roku 3 (\$99) and Amazon's Fire TV (available).

(15) Chevrolet MyLink's GWH (\$199) records free digital programming to a 4-day live feed drive while you watch another program—so you can listen to an integrated programming guide.



See, "Leaving Max out is just one less thing we have to worry about." And if there were ever a fire, he'd know he wouldn't be trapped.

Despite Jason's caution to try new gadgets, they keep only those that simplify their lives. That building was a furnace for the dog, which leaked, damaged the floor, and got really messy! Buried in the basement, alongside a collection of other smart-home flaps. The gadgets that remain must be intuitive to operate. "It's important that anybody who comes into the house can still see the lock, the light, and the appliances without having special knowledge or training," Jason says. The light switches and thermostat work like normal ones—they just do more. A mixer can over the thermostat up or down without knowing it's on a schedule, monitoring whether anyone's home.

The one aspect of the household that Jason feels immune

to the smart-home promise is the media room. "The Johnsons' TV console boasts with every kind of over-the-top streaming device, from Apple TV to Roku, and they will pay good money every month for cable. It's a source of frustration," Sam says about the array of content sources. Particularly when Jake wants to watch *How to Train Your Dragon* and nobody can remember how to access it.

"A 6-year-old was in so much of a rage," says Jason.

"There's always the laptop," says Sam, right.

Jason nods and offers up a radical alternative: "Just grab a book."

He's only half-joking. In his role, Jason is acutely aware that whenever the heart of the smart home, if the gadget doesn't work, people will be perfectly happy to go on living their lives as they did before. You remember back when the only thing connected to the Internet was the computer.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A SMART HOME LIKE THIS?

NO

YES

What are you interested in?

Entertainment

Security

Convenience

Home Monitoring

Lighting Controls

Smart Appliance

Temperature Control

Home Theater

Multi-room Audio

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CEA
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POINT OF ENTRY

If you've never known life without keys, well, it's a wonderful thing. Indeed, these four **smart-home door locks** are all about convenience.

PRODUCT	MODE OF ENTRY	KEY MANAGEMENT	NEAT TRICK	SECURITY	PRICE
August Smart Lock 	With Bluetooth or an Auto-Unlock enabled in app, approach door and then whenever door will automatically unlock. Reentry is waiting left, holding in for a thumb turn.	Use app to send "key" to unlimited number of guests; get notifications when key holders come and go; key activity and remote keys. Full remote access via Wi-Fi remote access bridge (250)	Early unlock/lock phone access by downloading app on another phone and logging in with owner password.	Score as existing deadbolt	\$250 august.com
Kwikset SmartCode 910 Touchscreen Electronic Deadbolt 	Punch in PIN code to retract tapered deadbolt, or add lock to Z-Wave or ZigBee network and use smartphone app/lock or unlock from anywhere.	Issue up to 30 access codes and use app to revoke them.	Randomized numbers that appear before you can enter PIN means no visual marks on keypad to thwart thieves.	Grade 2	\$249 kwikset.com
Bridge Sense 	On the cheap! Punch in PIN code on keypad, besides for four-digit door via Bluetooth as you approach or if lock connects to Apple TV) use app from anywhere.	Use app to create/delete up to 30 guest PIN codes and schedule when they're valid. Grant trusted guest app access (allow them to control key HomeKit device in house).	Only smart locks to take commands from Siri thanks to Apple HomeKit integration.	Grade 1	\$229 schlage.com
Yale Real Living Key Free Touchscreen Deadbolt 	Punch in PIN code to retract tapered deadbolt or add lock to Z-Wave network and use smartphone app to lock or unlock door from anywhere.	Grant up to 25 individual access codes and manage with app.	No key at all: impossible to pick! Even more impossible to force your leg! (Tip: Change wash bolt as promptly.)	Grade 2	\$275 yale.com



Open sesame

Time to find something else to obsess over besides whether you left the garage door open. Once you install the **Chamberlain MyQ Garage kit**—the Wi-Fi hub and your existing opener's remote signal—you can use the app to open or close the door or check its position from anywhere. Set it to ping you if the door opens, or alert to list the delivery guy drop-off a package. \$130 chamberlain.com

GET CONNECTED Jordan Smith/Hungry Outdoors for some broadband willpower from T-Mobile and the Consumer Electronics Association. Ask your smart-home questions and get answers from the crew. For details go to thesmarthome.com or call 800-222-2222.

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THE FUTURE IS ON



HOME At Last

By **Fiona Stone** Photographs by **Alex Hayden**
Produced by **Tisha Leung** Styling by **Rachel Grunin**





ABOVE Built-in with leaded glass fronts softened the space. The table was made with lumber harvested and milled on-site. *Chris, Overlook.com*
Photo: Robert J. Scott

RIGHT The heartwood-lined exterior has the feel of a beach. *Photo: Robert J. Scott*
Photo: Robert J. Scott

HEY, SLIPUPS HAPPEN. One time a house fell right into Roger Soud's. It was like a slow-motion disaster scene. One instant, the proud owners of a two-story Victorian were basking in a new location, the next, they were practically homeless.

We were pretty determined not to let that happen. For one thing, it had taken time and luck to get our hands on our house—a scarce, century-old Craftsman that perfectly fit the period-house puzzle against my husband, Eddie, and me. For another, we had no Plan B.

When I first saw the house, it had been piled off a valuable lot in Seattle to make way for a bigger replacement. When it went to someone else, I was really bummed. That was the one I wanted, after all. I should explain why we were looking to move a house in the first place. We were living in Bellevue, north of Seattle, when our daughter, Malina, was born, and soon we knew where we wanted to be back on Orcas Island, where we both grew up. It's a beautiful place, a few hours southwest of



Flora and Edward Stone and their daughter Malina. It took time to find the right house to build on.

MORE MAKEOVERS
To view a gallery of whole-house makeovers, go to overlook.com/makeovers

Seattle by car and ferry, with a state park where you can hike holes and homes and swim and hike—just perfect for kids. Eddie and his family there, along with 30 acres in Olga originally owned by his great-grandfather. Building on the island costs a fortune, which we don't have, so one day, after I spotted a house on a farbed while I was driving on the freeway, I did some research. I found a company, Nickel Beachers, that moves houses in the Seattle and Vancouver areas and even has a gay on staff, Jeff McCord, who finds new homes for

unwanted old houses. It's a win-win proposition, since demolition is costly and moving a house can save a third of the cost of building from scratch. The house is typically free, even if moving it is not.

Jeff's the one who told us about the Craftsman. When it initially went to another take, we got disappointed and began looking at other construction. We found a model we liked and began working out the details. Permit take forever because each new house has an environmental impact. So you need a site map plan and you have to bring in water, power, and phone lines, which cross other people's property, and the whole island is rock. We even had a tree problem. To make way for the farbed, we would have to clear out Doug fir living our dune.

Then the recession hit, it was like a game of dominoes. The woman who originally acquired the Craftsman couldn't sell her old place, so she walked away, leaving the house sitting on crickets in the port of Everett, roughly 50 miles from our property. Jeff called to say the house could be ours after all, just as our own deal fell through—the perfect opportunity suddenly went out of business. So in the end we got the house we really wanted for the cost of moving, restoring, and building a top.

Amazingly, the Craftsman had almost exactly the

FLOOR PLANS

The two-bedroom, one-bath Craftsman originally measured just 1,000 square feet. The houseowners set it on a new foundation, adding a 1,000-square-foot walk-out basement and a deck off the rear entry. They finished the 500-square-foot attic, adding windows and walls and a great bed. A workshop, a chicken coop, and a farm stand were also added to the property.



A bathroom with a white toilet, a white pedestal sink, and a window with a black frame. The walls are light blue and white.

A collection of various flowers and plants, including a large yellow flower, a purple flower, and several smaller ones, arranged in a row.



help frame the basement. We decided to hire Dan's father, Chuck, a do-it-all carpenter who could help us rebuild and refinish while preserving as much as we could. He became our mentor.

Chuck helped us appreciate all the great touches, from the hand-sawn beams and joists to the wavy-glass windows. He had a structural engineer take a look before we started making the house, top to bottom. We paired and replaced rafters to make a bow out of the roof, and ordered floor joists to support extra weight in the attic. We brought in pro to bring plumbing and wiring up to date, and did spray-foam insulation, and redid the roof.

We also wanted a deck in back, and because one thing and another the estimate for all the wood was close to \$20,000. That we could not afford. So two years in, Eddie and Dan decided, when the heck, we have plenty of trees right on the property, let's just cut up and buy a *Mobile Dimension* instead! The house had a ton of trees inside, which I took all and placed down and matched where I had to.

Chuck added back the main fireplace and chimney, using a gaging hole where they once stood in a garage; built stairs down to the new basement and helped refinish the worn-out kitchen and spilt up the bath. The kitchen windows couldn't be saved, but I found a rift of salvaged windows that worked just fine. To finish the attic, we added wood floors

OPPOSITE: Floor lifts a recessed floor that opens off the attic space when the family wants to conserve heat.

ABOUT LEFT: Plankers give beams and grooves plenty of the ceiling in the newly finished space, which holds together a TV at several office space and a small guest room at the other. *Flooring: Progs*

ABOVE: Eddie's father, Chuck, helped us build the house by stripping the floor and doing the walls, then painting the kitchen. Through out the house, the paint is white. Eddie's father, Chuck, helped us build the house by stripping the floor and doing the walls, then painting the kitchen. Through out the house, the paint is white. Eddie's father, Chuck, helped us build the house by stripping the floor and doing the walls, then painting the kitchen. Through out the house, the paint is white.

SHOOT THE STYLE
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under the gables, laid the doped ceiling with pine, and put in a flooring floor. Chuck was more than a little skeptical when I suggested using an old door, refinished by Eddie from his childhood home, as a hatch cover. But he came around. By then, after working together for 18 months—a bit longer than planned—we had really become friends.

With much of the remodel behind us, I ran back to my customary patchwork of paid jobs. This summer I run a boat-rental service and an ice cream parlor while also raising horses. Eddie has been busy looking for property and getting ready to sell and in order to make the business. Eddie's father, Chuck, helped us build the house by stripping the floor and doing the walls, then painting the kitchen. Through out the house, the paint is white.

Of course, we're still making improvements. If all goes as planned, we'll soon have a new basement monster room, and one day a wood-burning furnace. After six long years, though, the end is finally in sight. It's a crazy life—and exactly the one we wanted when we set out for Ocean, embracing a wonderful old house along the way. ■

The Search for **America's Best Remodel 2015**

ONE-ROOM Wonders

Some folks put so much into perfecting a single space—design sense, DIY chops, cost-cutting savvy, meticulous attention to detail—that we decided to highlight their winning efforts, too. Out of countless reader entries in this year's contest, here are the **five most marvelous makeovers**. Congrats!



ABOVE: The Fawns enjoy their new open dining area against the backdrop of a striking chevron wall. Andrea painted it in one day with chalkboard paint after spending the idea online. From left: Lila, El, Sophie, E, Andrea, Marika, A, and Jacob, holding Ava, 18 months



BEST REDO KITCHEN

Andrea and Jacob Faw
PEDIHA HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS

WHAT THEY DID: Rehab their kitchen, complete with DIY cabinetry, for less than \$30,000—off while working full time, homeschooling two kids, and expecting a baby

THEIR STORY: When we bought our 2006 farmhouse in October 2000 Jacob and I knew that restoring it would be a challenge. I had been converted to a duplex, and years of renters had taken a toll, especially on the kitchen. We dove right in, tearing up the vinyl tile floor only to discover it had been sealed over a layer of purple paper. That's right, the over-capped purple carpet! After that unpleasant surprise, we decided to wait awhile before doing any more work. We eventually knocked down a wall to a bedroom to create a larger, more open plan, but the big renovation was still on hold.

Fast-forward to 2013. We had three young girls and I'd just discovered that I was pregnant with daughter number four. I didn't want



LEFT: The Fawns painted the cabinets white but opted for birch butcher block counter tops and a magnetic stirrer wheel (sewn by Jacob's mom) to hold the cabinetry together. It—with a little help from his handy carpenter—DURRRE!

KITCHEN: Deep-ocean drawers and a floor-to-ceiling pantry offer plenty of storage. **BILLER:** Andrew wanted the upper cabinets in each side of the stove to be open on one side, but there was an extra 1/2-inch on the right. The six custom wooden shelves made from a flower butcher block



board when going on with a baby in the house, so we had to get serious. We wanted a kitchen that felt true to the era of the house, and a big part of that was honoring the look of the original cabinets, which had to be replaced because of water damage on the lower units. Jake had long dreamed of making his own cabinetry, and although he'd never done a carpentry project of that magnitude, he was game. We worked as a team. I sketched and he built. Over the next six months he crafted cabinets in our garage on evenings and weekends. He also made a storage pantry and a prep island with easily accessible kid-friendly drawers for sippy cups and the like. I had my heart set on marble for its top, but I worried it was too high maintenance with little ones. I opted for a beautiful slab of quartzite I found at a Chicago area stone yard and spent a home while eight months pregnant.

By the time we tiled the backplash, I was nine months along. In fact, I was grouting just two days before I gave birth to my youngest daughter. It's funny: I took a picture and renovation when the floor and cabinetry were ripped out and we were heating frozen meals in the microwave. It reminds me of what it was like—just in case we ever put the urge to renovate again. I know I would look at our beautiful kitchen and forget what the labor was like. I guess it's a little like childbirth that way!

RIGHT: Andrew added plenty of more designed, more approved touches like this pull-out shelving unit next to the stove. "It is so more efficient and so much better colored than a 'hugy Susan' one says."



After adding insulation and backing the room to the solid half-bath (BEFORE), Tom built a wooden rough frame to hold the shower pan. The room's existing brick walls were painted black gray. He built a rafted ceiling to top off the period look.

REST ROOM BATH

Tom Lobbey
HARLEYSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

WHAT HE DID: Rebuilt a plain powder room in original vintage style

HIS STORY: My wife, Nicole, and I both went away one weekend so that I could give the bath a little update. Well, it turned into a big update. I ripped out the vanity, the walls, the toilet, and the floor—well, that's when I realized that the subfloor was rotting around the toilet. By the time my family returned, the room was gutted. Nicole just shook her head, but she had faith.

It was slow going, because I did all the work myself: nights and weekends. I started by replacing the subfloor, wiring, and drywall, then I installed electric radiant floor heating. The whole time, I had a vision of what I wanted: something that would fit with the simple elegance of the rest of the house.

The vanity, which I built around two large storage barrels we already had, definitely pushed my skill set. I'd made lots of doors over the years, as a self-taught carpenter, but never drawers. For the mirror, I used old barn wood. I pulled from a contractor's dumpster years ago. The colored ceiling may have been the trickiest. I built brackwork for the box beams with left-over plywood, then placed cardboard before tacking on crown molding. Then I installed the crown we're not very impressive. Instead of taking it down, I just added the taller crown right over it—you'd never know!

The whole thing took nine months, but it's one of the first projects I've ever taken on where I'm completely satisfied.



[BEST REDO]

CURB
APPEALKatie Brashers-Nobart
and David Nobart
MILL HILL, PENNSYLVANIA

WHAT THEY DID Katie and David re-created the original wrap-around porch on their circa-1874 Folk Victorian.

THEIR STORY "A couple of months before we got married, I fell in love with the house. My now husband Dave just kept mulling it. It's a lot of work, over and over, but I can't believe it was my purpose in life to love and maintain this home. So I told him 'I'm buying this house with or without you.' Poor Dave! Eventually he came around, and we restored it inside and out, together as newlyweds.

We're only the third family to own it. The previous folks made a lot of changes, including ripping off much of the original porch rather than repairing the rot. But they gave us a picture of a painting of the exterior as it looked in 1890, and we were inspired!

We spent six months rebuilding the facade to look as much as it is today. All the way down to the

log-sawn-and-grooved hemlock flooring. It took Dave and my stepdad 12 hours to dig holes for the porch columns because the ground is more rock than soil. We hired an Amish man to hand-build our railing, which I painted. A local painter painted the rest of the exterior. Hired during the week as his side job—it took him six weeks!

Although it was hard for Dave to see my vision at first, we now agree that it's beautiful. Now it's so much that sometimes I even hug the columns! Random strangers tell us the place looks great. One guy riding by on his bike shouted, 'That house should be in a magazine!' I hope we did him justice someday, just so we can show him the



PHOTO: JENNIFER FRIEDMAN; PORCH: JAMES HILL

ABOVE The porch was rebuilt from the footings to the roof shingles to match the original, after previous owners had removed it. **OPPOSITE** LEFT: Katie is stepdad's lovely spouse, to motivate the folks out on the porch for a while.

THE BEST OF
THE REDO

To move pillars of the front porch in 1890, we used a crane to lift them out and set them back in place.



[BEST REDO]

LIVING SPACE

Bill and Melissa Forrest
ST. LOUIS

The unfinished space (LEFT) allowed plenty of room to create under the new stair, as well as a private guest suite. **TOP LEFT** Melissa Forrest is the client, while Bill is the contractor.

WHAT THEY DID Turned a bare bones basement into a guest suite and entertainment space with a mid-century-modern vibe.

THEIR STORY Melissa and I love to entertain, so after we bought our place in 2011, all we could think about was finishing the walk-out basement. We knew it needed a bar along with a couch and TV. We also wanted a kitchenette, to prep for grilling on the patio, just outside the sliding doors. Most important was the guest suite, to let our parents be with and help take care of our kids when we start a family.

We hired a contractor to rough in the bathroom and run gas to the fireplace. I'd done some summer construction work, so I was pretty



concentrate finishing the rest. Even before we started building, Melissa was scouring the Web looking for decorating ideas to fit in with the mid-century-modern theme we used throughout the rest of the house.

We started by leaving the staircase and just replacing the treads—with cedar, after I saw the beautiful cedar bar at a mall shop made for us. It's soft wood, but the treads are holding up fine under a few coats of polyurethane.

It took eight months and a lot of late nights to finish. One evening around 7, we were cutting tile on a rented wet saw and I was ready to knock off. "Oh, no," Melissa said. "I'm going to get a dose of beer and we're going to finish this tonight. And we did—at 11 the next morning. It turned out to be a good story to tell around our new bar."



ABOVE: Bob turned the metal support column into a functional divider by leaving it in with 2x4s plus boards making it a dividing wall that holds a TV on one side and lighting on the other. **BELOW:** Heat-treated cedar, open steel stairs, and a white exposed ceiling keep the walk-out basement feeling bright.

BELOW: The couple stacks the Jack and Jill bathroom like a hotel with a hair dryer, toothpaste, extra towels, and a sewing kit. The flooring vinyl makes it a breeze to get water with it to clean the dark vinyl flooring.



BEST REDO YARD

Matthew Grubaugh
SUNAMIT, INDIANA

WHAT HE DID: Seized windows, a door, and—literally—the kitchen sink to build a charming nook shed.

HIS STORY: Grubaugh was something I did with my mom as a kid. We started seeds in the house, then planted the vegetables and ornamental flowers in the yard. As an adult, I didn't pay much attention to the benefits of growing your own food until after my daughter, Hazel, was born. She spent her first week in intensive care with pneumonia, and barely survived. Since then, my wife Rachel, and I have done our best to avoid toxins in our food, especially for Hazel and her brother, Grayson. That's why I built the potting shed. About mid-way through the renovation of our 2003 Dutch Colonial, we discovered lead paint. We hired an abatement pro and the house is now 99 percent lead-free, but Rachel is still more comfortable starting seeds outdoors.

I designed the 30 by 34-foot shed using CAD software—I'm an engineering/product manager—they asked a friend who once worked as a carpenter for some help. We stripped the lead paint from windows salvaged from the house's den and used them to line the shed's southern exposure and front wall. The entry door was originally the side door to the house, and the kitchen sink became the potting bench.

Hazel has been right with me in the garden from day one. We start seeds in the shed under grow lights, then transplant them outside. We try to take something from our garden to include in every meal, and we talk about when we planted it, how we cared for it, how incredible it tastes and how healthy it is for us. ■



Left



TOP: A bevy of plants, including raspberry, basil, dill, dandelion, and Goldenrod. **Shed-to-day:** greet the family as they enter the shed. **RIGHT:** Matthew and his daughter, Hazel, often spend time potting plants in the former kitchen sink. Matthews designed the shed, then finished it with the help of a friend (DAR-ING).

PHOTOS: KATHY KIRKMAN FOR HGTV HOME IDEAS

{Readers' TIPS}

You people never cease to amaze. Every year, we ask you to share your proudest **time-saving tricks**, **inventive problem solvers**, and **downtight ingenious discoveries**. And once again, you came through. On behalf of DIYers everywhere, we salute you—and can't wait to steal these excellent ideas.



Safe wallpaper remover

Stripping off the top layer of our painted-over wallpaper was a snap, but its backing layer didn't budge from the plaster. So I sprayed the backing with a 50/50 solution of white vinegar and water. After soaking a few minutes, the old backing and paste came off easily with a putty knife. Then I wiped the plaster clean using a sponge soaked in the same vinegar solution. Problem solved! without chemicals.

Kristen Grigor
SALVEMORE, IOWA

Bag on wheels

Here's an easy way to reuse a paper yard waste bag. Put it in one of those folding carts meant for carrying groceries. No more torn bags from dragging them on the ground, and no more sores back from carrying them!

Mary Potter
ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN

Filters for clean ducts

The filter on most heating and cooling systems does a slip job of getting into the return ducts. So I bought a filter—one of those cheap black ones for window air

conditioners—behind the grille that covers each return. They're easily cut to fit and make the furnace filter last much longer. I inspect each return filter regularly and replace it when dirty. The insides of my ducts still look brand new.

Rag Lacerelli
DANBY, CONNECTICUT

Static stopper

When my vertical window blinds cling together due to static, I rub a fabric-softener sheet over the slats so that they will hang freely.

Karen Spearer
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA



Easy paint cleanup

"An old nylon dish scrubbing pad my wife was about to throw away turned out to be a great tool for cleaning latex paint residue off my hands and other surfaces."

Roger Ward
GRAYSON, GEORGIA



Trinidad Pera
SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY

Long-lasting cut flowers

"Hydrangeas, peonies, and dahlias have a gooey sap that skins over when their stems are cut, preventing the flowers from taking up water. To break that skin, hold a lighter or candle flame on the cut for 30 seconds, then stick the stem right away into a vase of water."





Cliff Gabriel
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Hedge-trimmer trick

"As a landscaper down in Florida, my dad taught me a good trick for keeping an electric hedge trimmer in top working order: Just drizzle a little leftover cooking oil on the blades. It keeps them lubricated and free of sap, and unlike petroleum-based oils, it doesn't harm the plants. I'm convinced that it actually speeds up the work!"

inserted the pole, the jaws can hold on to a mouthful even with only 3 inches of separation at the top of the handles."

Gary Klein
OKLAHOMA

Spindle sander

"It would have taken me forever to hand sand the bare antique spindles I'd removed from our remodeled porch. So I lugged an inside-out sanding belt around with spindles and imposed it on a lathe. Then, while wearing leather work gloves, I put tension on the belt as the lathe turned and quickly smoothed all the spindles round without a scratch. A stationary belt sander took care of the square top and bottom portions."

Susan Gifford
LAULAIM, WISCONSIN

Soaking sash cords

"One of the hardest parts of replacing a broken sash cord is fishing it over the pulley and down into the weight pocket. So I make a messenger line by knotting one end of a length of light twine and sliding four or five small nuts against the knot. Then I tie the twine's other end to the new sash

cord and feed the nuts over the pulley. When they get down to the access panel on the jamb, I grab the twine, pull down the cord, and tie it on the sash weights. Simple."

Joseph Fungen
MCNOSH, MINNESOTA

Birdbath protector

"My friend, Doug Burdick, is a genius. Even better, he's a frugal genius. Rather than risk a hernia carrying our birdbath barbs into the garage, he winterized it by covering it with a heavy-duty plastic garbage can lid. It's a perfect fit and works great during our long, snowy winters."

Gretchen Swanson
DEAR, MICHIGAN

No-slip toilet seat

"Here's how to permanently stop a toilet seat from shifting around: Fit a rubber garden hose washer under the head of each seat bolt. Then thread a short length of rubber tubing—no longer to the toilet's porcelain flange is thick—over the bolt's threads. When the bolts are tightened, there won't be any slip between the rubber collar and the porcelain."

Lee Ashenbault
HOLMA, MONTANA

Floor-gap filler

"The seams in my wide-plank pine floors had grown barren and unsightly, so I borrowed a technique from my boatbuilding friends and filled the gaps with fat strips of caulking cotton. I rolled the cotton into a twist and powdered it lightly into the gap with a broad chisel. Then I covered the cotton with a brown sealant. After I restored the floors, they looked great."

Connie Davier
ROCKLAND, MAINE

Fastener organizer

"When disassembling anything I use an ice cube tray to store the screws in sequence for easy reassembly. It not only keeps me from losing the parts, it also helps me identify which screws go where and rebuild in the correct order."

Shawn Lehn
QUEENSBURY, NEW YORK

Wiring advice

"Most people know to wrap solid wire clockwise around an electrical terminal before tightening the screw. But most don't know that stranded wires should be given a counterclockwise twist before wrapping them clockwise around

the screw. Doing this pulls the strands into the terminal rather than pushing them out, giving you a better connection. It comes in handy when replacing the plug on an extension cord. For example,

Joseph Fornace
QUESTON, PENNSYLVANIA

No more loose handles

"If the screw-in handle on my push broom gets loose, I wrap some white pipe-thread tape around the threads on the handle. That locks it in place."

Lyndon Ray
MERCER, IOWA

Robert DeWood
HOUSTON

Easy-to-fill lawn bags

"To stop shrub waste from tearing up my plastic yard bags, I punch the bottom out of a small cardboard box to form a cylinder that fits inside the mouth of the bag. If the box is too big, I'll tear off one side and resize it. And when I'm done, I just jiggle the cardboard out."



Best brush for painting edges

Whenever I paint along an edge, I get the best results from a round-tipped brush. After loading it with paint, I twist the handle as I move it along, that keeps a consistent amount of paint coming off the bristles and makes it easy to stay on line. Round-tipped brushes cost a little more than flat brushes, but they work great!"

Mary Amble
STEVEN

Longer life for wet/dry vac filters

"When my vac's filter gets plugged with dust, I let a dryer vent brush on my cordless drill and slowly rotate

the brush against the filter as I hold it over a garbage can. The brush is long, coarse-bristles reach in and clean between the filter's folds. It's amazing how well this works."

Jack Stolt
WILLIAMSVILLE, NEW YORK

Posthole trick

"Rained on a farm, I dug my full share of postholes using common scissor-style posthole diggers. And I figured out how to dig a straight-sided 6- to 8-inch-diameter hole down to 30 inches. Normally in a hole that narrow, the digger's handles hit the hole's sides after you get about a foot down and the digger's jaws can't grab any soil. But when you pour a little water into the hole to

{MOXIE Awards}

Now here's an **enterprising bunch**: You did everything from ridding your house of bee colonies, rats, and scorpions to building a log cabin (inside the garage!). Call it chutzpah, pluck, or outright bullheadedness, but **there's no doubt you've got what it takes—and with that, our respect**

By Kathryn O'Shea-Evans



into a cabin-like dining room. Using a \$10 garage-sale electric chain saw, he milled the 300-pound beams and clad the walls with planks. "First I had to lift them with a forklift. I made out of conduit and wheels off my lawn mower," Ken says. The hardest part, though, was handling the pain. Ken has peripheral neuropathy, a condition that causes him to feel pins and needles in his left foot 100 percent of the time. His solace? "These projects are my chocolate," he says.

The "Painkiller" Award

Ken Vander Wal
MOSINEE, WISCONSIN



When Ken split 300-pound rough-cut, 20-foot-long cedar beams for less than

\$200 at an Amish auction, he had to buy them—even with no project in mind. After consulting with his wife, who loves the woody look, he did something we'd never have imagined: He turned his garage



The "Dig Deep" Award

Robert Edwards
OMAHA



Robert wanted more space in his 1,200-square-foot 1902 four-square, but an addition was too costly. He had a solution: "I went down"—as in, to the unfinished basement—with a pickaxe, jackhammer, and shovels, on weekends and also evenings after work. "I broke up the concrete and carried it up the stairs and out, two 5-gallon buckets at a time," he says. All for 5 extra inches of headroom. Still, that netted 600 square feet of new space, new home to a full bath, an exercise room, a TV room, storage, and some very tired muscles.

"I lifted 2,200 pounds of rock, 600 pounds of stepping stones, and 720 pounds of retaining wall to build my outdoor room. Not too shabby!"

Shannon Derjen
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

The "Family First" Award

Jeff and Liz Beaudry
LAKELAND, MINNESOTA



Before they could move into Liz's grandfather's lake house, the Beaudrys had to gut the entire place, redo the electrical and the wood floors, and build a new garage. That all sounds normal—except that Jeff did the work during the graveyard shift. "For a year, he drove over an hour to the house at 1 A.M. to work overnight on the renovation so that he could be back home by noon to pick up our sons," Liz says. Now that's what we call a family man.



The "Preservationist" Award

Jon and Doreen Thomson
LENDON, NORTH CAROLINA



These nookie homeowners bought their 1943 Craftsmen and decided—screw-it!—it would be fun to restore the 39 diamond-pane windows, lead paint and all. They could use the detached garage as a workshop—you know, the one with no electricity. So far, they've scraped away the putty on 545 individual panes and rebuilt, reglazed, and repainted the cokes. Another project using a wet saw to slice 700 bricks from the old chimney into French veneers for the new one. "We feel good knowing that our house will last another century," Jon says. Here's hoping they finish by then.



The "Gut It Out" Award

Danny and Get Gonies
CHESTER, NEW JERSEY



The Gonies family was just starting work on their new house when Superstorm Sandy hit. "A total of 67 trees fell on our 2½-acre property, piercing through the master bedroom and barricading the driveway," Get says. While Danny was clearing the grounds, part of a hickory tree snapped into his chest. He spent a week in the ICU, with nine cracked ribs. Danny took a three-week break and, because he couldn't wait to finish, kept right on working.

"I put so much sweat equity into deconstruction on our house, I lost 20 pounds in three months!"

Kim Guelrie VERNON, WISCONSIN



The "Creature Feature" Award

Dorey and Pamela Mel allan
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA



Little did they know that the circa-1883 orphanage on Texas's Quintana Island they had bought as their dream home was already inhabited. Bees had moved in behind the siding, rats were nesting beneath a tub (flooding on the honey), and fleas were living between the floorboards (hosting on the rats). A rattlesnake sunned itself near the porch. Scorpions roamed inside. "Plus," Pamela says, "the mosquitoes were right out of a horror movie—in size and number. The guy who mowed our lawn would wear a full beekeeper's outfit to protect himself." ●



We love it when homeowners look to the past for inspiration.



Norm Abram
TOH master carpenter

Watch as TOH rebuilds a wraparound porch and restores original windows, a claw-foot tub, and a marble vanity in an 1895 Victorian.



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INSIDE
POTTED HYDRANGEAS / REMOVE A TUB
/ SAGGING DOOR / EDGE A DRIVEWAY / MORE

Q Routers scare me. Is there another way for me to make grooves in boards?

Jeremy Powers
PORTLAND, OREGON

A Long before there were motorized routers, craftsmen who needed to cut grooves reached for a plough plane, like my maple-bodied beauty here. Its two large wooden screws adjust a fence, which controls where the blade makes its cut. This tool was made in the early 1800s by Casey & Co. of Auburn, New York. Grasping its finely sculpted handle feels like shaking the hand of an old friend.

Bob Flynn
CHILMARK, MASSACHUSETTS

*Reader asking:
this issue,
you provide
the answers*



PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSIE SCHWABE

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Our cast of master experts



Gerry Pomeroy
Master plumber
with 61 years of experience
Services: Thunder
Bay, Ont.
Years in the trade: 30+



Susan Cohen
Landscape designer
owner of Susan
Cohen Gardens
Greenville, N.J.
Years in the trade: 30+



Michael Bond
Decorative contractor
owner of M.B.
Construction
Hockessin Heights, Mass.
Years in the trade: 15+



Maurice Turgeon
Master electrician
owner of The Service
Electric Services
Winnipeg, Wis.
Years in the trade: 30+

In keeping with the spirit of this issue, we recruited a group of pros from our online community to field your home-improvement questions this month. Our veteran experts from TOH TV—Tom Silva, Norm Abram, Richard Trethewey, Roger Cook, and Kevin O'Connor—will be back next issue. If you need help before then, pay a visit to TOH's online discussion boards at advice.thisoldhouse.com or facebook.com/thisoldhouse

We have a hydrangea that we moved from the ground to a container. Can we leave it outside all winter, or would it do better inside a garage?

—CON STANLEY, SANDWICH, ONT.



A hydrangea can survive the winter if you take steps to insulate the soil from the freeze-thaw cycles that destroy roots and kill the buds.

Susan Cohen REPLIES: In the good old, many types of hydrangeas can survive your USDA Zone 6 winters. But in a pot exposed on all sides, the roots will suffer more frequent freeze-thaw cycles and need to be given extra protection.

The safest approach is to move the container into an unheated garage and water the soil periodically during the winter. Put it back outside in early spring when the danger of a deep freeze is past.

But if you'd rather leave the pot outside, place it in a spot sheltered from the wind and out of the sun. There's no need to cover the plant, but you can insulate the soil from temperature swings by piling leaf mulch around the outside of the container and holding the mulch in place with burlap. Snow also provides good insulation if the pot is buried in it.

Whether the container spends the winter in a garage or outside, make sure it can survive freezing temperatures. Fiberglass, concrete, stone, metal, and wood are generally frost-proof; cement, including interlocking, is not.

Also, raise the pot off the ground to prevent ice from plugging the drain hole and turning the soil into a frozen-solid block. If your hydrangea is a reblooming big leaf variety, like *H. macrophylla* 'Endless Summer,' cut the stems back to about 6 to 8 inches from the top of the pot in late fall. That will encourage the growth of new stems and more blooms next spring.

When the tub has to go

What's the easiest way to remove the tub in my master bathroom? We want to replace it with a tiled shower stall.

—JULIA REISZ, SANDWICH, MASS.



What is it?

"We came across this old tool at a flea market. Can you guess what it's for?"

Michelle and Ron Buser, HOUSTON



Scrub tree when cutting lead flashing

Clamps boards against top of workbench

Sets spacing between clapboards

Cranks bowed floorboards into place

FOR THE ANSWERS, SEE PAGE 10

Michael Bond REPLIES: It depends on what your tub is made of. If it's fiberglass or acrylic, cut away about 2 to 3 inches of the wall around the perimeter of the tub's surround, then pull the tub out to secure the surround to the studs. Take off the shower valve's trim and handle, and use a reciprocating saw with a small-cutting blade to cut the tub into pieces that can be easily removed. When the drain is exposed, unscrew it or cut through it with the same blade.

For a cast-iron tub, break out the wall the next to the tub with a hammer and disconnect the drain and the overflow. Now take a large sledgehammer and whack the tub across the middle to break it into manageable sections, which are easier to carry out than an intact 300- to 400-pound piece. Before you start swinging, however, protect yourself from flying, razor-sharp cut iron shards by wearing safety glasses, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, work gloves, and—

very important—ear plugs.

Once the tub is gone, but before you start rebuilding, take down any drywall next to the tub and check for mold and damage to the framing.

Bad smell from the main drain

After the laundry tub in the basement overflowed a few years ago, a camera inspection revealed a sagging main sewage pipe under the basement slab. Now we smell sewage. I fear the sag has caused a leak in the main drain. What now?

—WILLIAM TOLLE, ROCKVILLE, MD

Gerry Pomeroy REPLIES: If there were a break in the line, it would have developed a blockage pretty quickly. Since a blockage has not occurred, the most likely suspect for a sewage smell would be a dry P-trap in a nearby toilet.

A P-trap in a toilet is old and a slug

What is it?

CLIPBOARD GAUGE

The Stanley No. 89 clipboard gauge patented in 1898, helped carpenters maintain consistent spacing during localization. When the handle is squeezed down on one side, the tool places the clipboard's bottom edge, holding itself in position while the rest of the board is set in place.



of water that blocks the roofline goes in a sewer system or septic tank from getting into the house. In frequently used traps, like the ones connected to sinks, the water is constantly replenished. But floor drains rarely have water draining into them, so the air dries out and, let's be honest, gets stinky. Pouring some water into the drain to replenish the trap seal. The smell should go away.

Adding water periodically is the simplest way to keep a trap on working order. I know that some people dump mineral oil into the drain to slow down evaporation, but I think a standard plug like SuperSeal (Innovative Corp.) would be a better solution. It lets water through but keeps the gas from escaping. You fit it into the drain outlet and finger it.

Stop roof sag

Our roofline is sagging, along with one side of the roof. Who should I call to take a look at it and fix it?

—THOMAS HEDDERGER, HOVE SPRINGS, PA.

Michael Bond REPLIES: A sagging ridge can be a serious structural issue, so you should call a contractor and have him bring a structural engineer. They should both be on-site at the same time to determine what's going on.

You may find that your roof needs only minor fixes with additional structural support. Or it may require major work,

such as replacing structural members and jacking up the roof.

This is not something to gut it—have it looked at now, before it goes worse.

Convert a 220-volt circuit to 110

Can I use the 220-volt wiring from an abandoned electric baseboard heater as a 110-volt outlet?

—CHARLES REDMON, LYNN, MASS.

Maurice Targem REPLIES: Yes, you can easily convert a 220- or 240-volt circuit to 110 or 120 volts—as long as the baseboard heater is the only load on the circuit.

Start the conversion by killing focused electricity to replace the two-pole circuit breaker in the main electrical panel with a single-pole 20-amp breaker that also functions as an arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI). This type of combination breaker offers the best protection against fires caused by arcing wires, and it is required by the National Electrical Code (NEC).

You can take care of installing the receptacle at the other end of the circuit. It should be rated for 120 volts and 20 amps, to match the new breaker, and be tamper resistant (TR). The NEC also mandates TR receptacles.

The cable that went to the baseboard heater probably has (and, yes, still

Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

10-gauge wire). To make the job of attaching them to the receptacle snare, install a two-gang box, which has more room to work in than a single-gang box. Feed the cable into the box, and use wire nuts to connect the thick wires to short lengths of flexible, stranded 12-gauge copper jumper wires. Keep the wire colors consistent: Use a black jumper on the cable's black wire, a white jumper on the white wire, and a green jumper on the ground wire.

That's another advantage to using a two-gang box: You can install a second receptacle as well. Just treat an extra jumper onto each 10-gauge wire, as above, and connect each jumper to the appropriate receptacle terminal.

Fix for a crooked steel door

How do I fix a steel entry door that no longer hangs square in its opening? I'd rather not replace it.

—GLENN STATION, MAULDSBOROUGH, MASS.

Michael Bond REPLIES: Have you checked the hinge screws? Maybe they're loose and need to be tightened. If they're stripped and can't be tightened, back them out, glue a matchstick over a piece of wood in each hole, and drive the screws back in place.

If the door still sags, and it's heavier on wood panels, then the door's weight has probably pulled the hinge-side track out of plumb. The solution is simple: Install longer screws that go through the plank and bite into the hinge-side track.

To do that, open the door wide enough for you to buck out a screw from the top hinge—the screw closest to the centerline of the plank. Then take a 4-inch threaded screw with a head the same diameter as the hinge-lid flange and drive it through the plank and into the stud. Tighten or loosen this screw until the gap across the top of the door is even. It won't hurt to do the

same thing to the other hinges.

But if the door panels are steel, they'll need to be resealed. To do that, back out the two screws at the bottom of the hinge-side plank—one on the inside face, one on the outside—and use a pry bar to push the plank up until the gap across the top of the door is even. Put a hardwood shim under that plank and anchor it in place with two new screws. I wish longer than the originals, driven through the plank's existing screw holes and into the framing.

Driveway edge treatment

I am getting ready to put in a gravel driveway. What should I use along the edge to keep the gravel in and the grass out?

—GREG LANGRISH, RUSSELLVILLE, MO.

Susan Cohen REPLIES: My favorite way to contain gravel is with two rows of pavers, one set upright on edge on one end and the other lying flat as a ribbon between the gravel and the upright one. The upright row should be anchored in concrete so that the pavers won't move. The ribbon pavers can be set in sand or stone dust, then laid even with the top of the gravel.

Belgian blocks are a fantastic material for this application. They're granite, and therefore incredibly durable, and they lock great into a gravel. Block or concrete pavers are less expensive options that perform nearly as well.

Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

Go to thisoldhouse.com/askdo

Or write to: Ask This Old House
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Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Questions submitted will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We request that because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unpublished questions.

PROJECT OF THE WEEK

HOW TO BUILD A FIRE PIT



Looking for a cozy place to gather family and friends on a cool night? In just a few days you can build your own stone fire pit.

To make building stone walls easier, you can use blocks made from cast concrete and molded to look like real stone (available at your local home center). They're flat on the top and bottom so they stack neatly, with some interlock for added strength. Glue them together with masonry adhesive. The optimal size for a fire pit is between 36 and 44 inches inside diameter. That will create enough room for a healthy fire (but still keep children close enough to chat).

You'll find all the tools and supplies necessary for this—and any—home project at The Home Depot nearest you.

For step-by-step instructions, go to thisoldhouse.com/project

Swing for a porch

I don't know where to hang the porch swing our kids bought us, because vinyl panels cover the porch ceiling. A studfinder proved useless. How do I find something sturdy enough to hang the swing on without removing the panels?

—KATHY HENDSON, KENNA, IDAHO

Michael Bond REPLIES: Unfortunately, you can't. At least one panel will have to come off temporarily so that you can locate the ceiling joists and see whether they'll support the swing.

To remove a panel, you'll need a pry bar and a vinyl-a-ding-a-dong-a-dong-a-dong tool, like the SideWiper II (www.products.com). Use the removal tool to separate the panels' interlocking edges and the pry bar to pull out the nails that support the panel.

Once you free a panel, note where you

want to hang the swing and peer into the space beneath the porch-roof rafters; you'll probably find a grid of joists nailed to the underside of ceiling joists. If these joists are 2x6s or bigger, you're in luck: Drill 1/4-inch pilot holes through the vinyl and into the bottom edge of a joist at pairs of points, depending on how the swing is oriented. To keep up 2x4 joists, glue and screw a 2x6 of the same length to the 2x4's face, and a color both of them to the house with a double joint banger. Drill the pilot holes into the 2x6's edge.

Then a 6-inch-long, 7/8-inch diameter galvanized eye screw into each pilot hole until the eye is just below the ceiling. Nail the panel back into place—make sure it can slide freely from end to end—and use the removal tool to hook it back onto the other panels. Hang your swing securely from the screws and enjoy! ■



A friendly porch swing requires sturdy support: a 2x6 or larger ceiling joist and a hefty pair of 1/4-inch diameter galvanized eye screws. To learn how to hang a swing, go to thisoldhouse.com/ask2015.

NATHAN JACOBSON

5 Proven Ways to Get Better Protection for Your Home

How to get protection and avoid getting ripped off—recommended by Tech Experts Personal Finance Wizards and Authorities in Home Security

1 Make sure it's wireless.

Wired alarms are vulnerable—a burglar can snip one wire and shut down your whole system. A wireless system protects your home even if a burglar cuts your power.

4 Watch out for sneaky "Getchas."

They're usually buried deep in the fine print of a home security contract. Here's an example from a top home security company's contract:

1. INCREASED BY CHARGES
 1. To be paid upon contract termination.
 2. To be paid upon contract termination.
 3. To be paid upon contract termination.

2 Compare monthly fees.

Many home security companies will charge you outrageous fees of over \$60 per month. It's possible to find the exact same protection for less.

3 Look for U.L. Listed

professional monitoring to send the police if there's an emergency at your house. U.L. Listed means the monitoring company is independently inspected every 6 months to ensure you get the highest caliber of protection.



SimpliSafe

Experts Recommend: SimpliSafe Home Security. A new award-winning wireless security system. CMET calls it, "Better, Smarter Home Security."

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- No long-term contracts locking you in

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Dear Tia Duff:

It's rare to find a house that's been suspended in time. As a preservationist—I work at Indiana Landmarks—that's what I love so much about the Goshute Festival cottage, which was built in 1807 and has undergone few changes since. What's even more special? From 1908 until the 1980s, it was owned by a single family. After the last remaining member passed away, in the 1990s, staff visited until our preservation crew bought it. In 2012

This little house has all the charms of a classic Capester Gothic, with storybook details like a steeply pitched gingerbread-gabled roof, decorative cornice brackets under the eaves, and outside ginghamed curtains on the porch. Inside, wide pine railing on the windows complements the baseboards and simple but refined mantels.

Amazingly, this home has never been updated, other than a basic electrical installation in the 1960s, so you'll have to old-planting, HVAC, and full electrical. A couple of small rooms upstairs could be converted to bath. The work is need repairs, but the floors, woodwork, and windows are all in great shape, and the house is undergoing an extensive paint job, too. Flipping this is best known for the local crowd, but it's a small town, founded in 1844 and less than an hour from Cincinnati, that retains plenty of vintage charm. This relative is one exception—and I'd love to see it brought into this century by someone with an appreciation for its history.

Security
James H. Hollbrook



original details make a house sing



- 1. The house sits on a quarter acre lot, which includes two outbuildings
- 2. One of the two fireplaces still has an original stained-pine mantel
- 3. Windows have been replaced and are framed with 6 inch pine casing. Many of the doors are original as well.
- 4. The property still features two old water-cisterns—once a substitute



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